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Letter dated 24 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I write in relation to the upcoming report of the Secretary-General regarding the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). As we approach the release of this report, I wish to share with the Security Council our concerns on key issues related to the implementation of this resolution.

First, let me stress that Israel is committed to resolution 1701 (2006), which serves as an important component of regional security, and expects any Government of Lebanon to respect all aspects of the resolution, including issues such as the arms embargo, the disarmament and disbandment of militias, the observance of the Blue Line in its entirety, and other obligations.

Over the past four years, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has carried out invaluable work, helping to limit open hostilities between Israel and Lebanon to relatively few instances. Notwithstanding these achievements, significant obstacles stand in the way of full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

In particular, we have witnessed a disturbing lack of progress in enforcing the arms embargo in Lebanon, a key element of resolution 1701 (2006) that sought to deny Hizbullah and other terrorist groups the means to build and reconstitute their illegal arsenals. Today Hizbullah remains in possession of more than 55,000 missiles and rockets and continues to focus on acquiring more advanced weaponry. This accumulation of weapons has been accomplished through joint and coordinated illegal arms transfers directly facilitated by the Syrian authorities across the Syrian-Lebanese border.

Unfortunately, despite the passage of more than three years since the publication of the first report of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team, no meaningful action has been taken by the relevant parties to combat illegal weapons transfers. The political situation in Lebanon, or other politically motivated justifications, cannot continue to be invoked in order to excuse further delays on this matter, which is critical for ensuring peace and security in our region.

Israel calls upon the Security Council and the Governments of Lebanon and Syria to take immediate action in preventing the illegal smuggling of weapons into Lebanon. As such, Israel hopes that the upcoming report will offer concrete steps forward to address this matter, accompanied by a realistic timetable.

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Another key element of resolution 1701 (2006) is the disarmament and the disbandment of Hizbullah and other militias. However, the same lack of progress that has defined combating illegal weapons transfers also permeates this issue. Hizbullah continues to deploy weapons throughout the civilian villages of southern Lebanon, adjacent to schools, hospitals, houses of worship and residential buildings.

In regard to the presence of weapons south of the Litani River, I wish to once again raise the 3 September 2010 incident in the village of Sheabiyya, during which a series of explosions ripped through a home owned by a Hizbullah operative. Following the incident, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and UNIFIL forces were denied entrance to the site of the explosion and its surroundings. Although the relevant parties were aware in real time that Hizbullah was tampering with evidence at this site, no action was taken by LAF forces to intervene. In our view, UNIFIL also did not take sufficiently robust action, given the circumstances.

This is only the latest in a number of similar incidents that have occurred in southern Lebanon in the last two years. Unfortunately, these repeated violations of resolution 1701 (2006) indicate a systematic failure in handling such incidents.

In response to the 3 September 2010 incident, the United Nations announced that it would investigate and derive conclusions. The Government of Israel hopes that the lessons learned over the course of this investigation will be concretely manifested on the ground to confront Hizbullah's current modus operandi, especially with regard to Hizbullah's continued deployment of weapons in civilian structures and villages.

In recent months, pursuant to my Government's decision on the matter of the village of Ghajar, Israel remains engaged in discussions with our counterparts in the United Nations regarding this issue.

In regard to the Blue Line, I would like to reiterate Israel's position about the need to respect the Blue Line in its entirety. Observing the clear and explicit demarcations of the Blue Line in its entirety will hope to promote stability in the region and prevent incidents such as the killing of Israeli Lieutenant Colonel Dov Harari by LAF on 3 August 2010.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that Israel fully supports the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and the work of UNIFIL, its mandate, and its commanders and soldiers. Israel sincerely appreciates the assistance of troop-contributing countries to this important effort.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Meron **Reuben**
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations